

AIRS MOU Requests from Non-Governmental,  
Public Service and Secondary Responder Organizations  
Presented to Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee  
August 17, 2010

## **Request**

The Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) requests recommendations from the SIEC on a policy permitting use of the Arizona Interagency Radio System (AIRS) by Non-Governmental, Public Service and Secondary Responder Organizations.

## **Background**

AIRS radio frequencies are used in the event of a multi-agency, multi-discipline, and/or multi-jurisdictional operation requiring the use of the common state radio channel(s), specifically for the purpose of coordinating activities during identified incidents.

Agencies and organizations wishing to operate on AIRS must sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DPS, which holds the licenses for AIRS frequencies. The MOU states that Governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), utilizing mobile and portable two-way radios, operated by personnel actively engaged in incident-related activities, are eligible to apply for operating authority pursuant to this MOU.

The AIRS Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) document states that AIRS is designed to provide interoperable communications capability to first responders of police, fire, and EMS agencies, as well as other personnel of municipal, county, state, tribal, and federal agencies performing public safety or public service activities. It further states that DPS may also determine that selected non-governmental organizations (NGOs) performing public safety or public service activities are eligible for approval to use AIRS.

DPS is requesting input from the SIEC regarding a policy it could implement that fairly and uniformly provides access to AIRS for appropriate NGOs, while protecting the effective use of AIRS as a statewide interoperability resource.

Organizations to be covered by such a policy would include such diverse entities as animal rescue groups, ski patrols, hospitals, volunteer search and rescue groups, and organizations identified in emergency plans as responsible for providing shelter.

At this time, DPS has a specific request for an AIRS MOU from the Show Low branch of the Arizona Rangers. In addition, other organizations have made informal inquiries to PSIC staff in its outreach throughout the State. DPS wishes to put a policy developed through a statewide consensus process in place before acting on any such requests.

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## **Considerations**

Some specific concepts which could be evaluated in regard to such a policy include:

- 1) Emergency management agencies responsible for developing and implementing emergency plans could be required to sponsor or endorse NGOs as essential to their emergency response plans and therefore appropriate AIRS users.
- 2) Definitions of NGOs which are considered public safety or public service agencies within existing State plans could be reviewed for guidance.
- 3) NGO policies regarding interoperable radio systems comparable in function to AIRS in other states could be reviewed for guidance.
- 4) The utility of establishing a SIEC review committee could be considered (similar to the COML Recognition program's review committee).

## **Next Steps**

DPS requests that PSIC staff work with the SIEC operational and technical workgroups to develop a draft policy for fairly and uniformly permitting the use of AIRS by Non-governmental, Public Service and Secondary Responders. The agency will then act promptly on the draft policy and process any outstanding related requests in as timely a manner as possible.